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ABSTRACT

This brief paper summarizes proceedings of a May 2000 conference, Discovering Hidden Resources: Partners and Volunteers--Assistive Technology Reuse Programs, hosted by the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. The conference focused on different approaches for involving corporate and private partners in reuse programs and on varied ways to recruit volunteers. Highlights of the conference are noted under the following topical headings: corporate philanthropy mirrors company's marketing goals; job training expands the mission of reuse programs; Wisconsin prison project benefits state and inmates; Alabama school system provides top-notch computer repair program; a model of assistive technology reuse programs--Georgia's Reboot program; global outlet for reused assistive technology; sources of federal grant funding; personal computer users groups--an outstanding source for expert volunteers; what the future holds for reuse programs; and Connecticut request for proposal process yields comprehensive assistive technology center. (DB)

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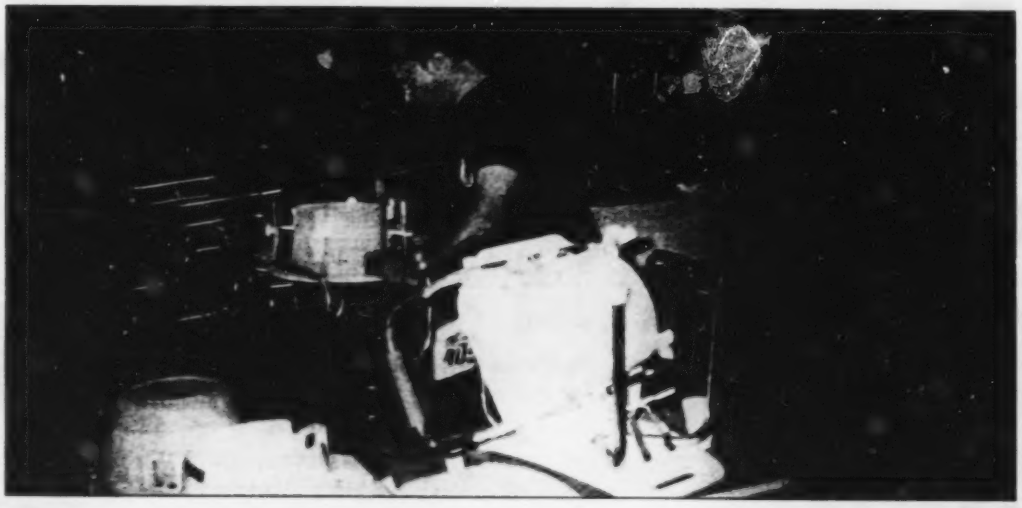
DISCOVERING HIDDEN RESOURCES:

# Partners and Volunteers—Assistive Technology Reuse Programs

**Proceedings—July 2000**

ED 449 600

*At a work station for assistive technology repair, a FODAC volunteer puts new hardware on equipment donated to the ReBoot/FODAC recycling center. A photo tour of the reuse facility is featured in this publication*



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## National Conference Stresses Partnerships, Long-Term Support for Reuse Programs

Expanding the reuse of assistive technology was the focus of a national meeting of more than 45 representatives of assistive technology (AT) reuse programs, technology companies, and nonprofit organizations that recently met in Decatur, Georgia. Conference participants discussed the establishment and maintenance of local, state, regional, and overseas reuse programs.

The conference, Discovering Hidden Resources: Partners and Volunteers—Assistive Technology Reuse Programs, was hosted by the RESNA Technical Assistance Project and the Georgia Tools for Life Project on May 1st and 2nd, 2000, as a follow-up to a national recycling conference that was held in 1999. The recent conference focused on different approaches for involving corporate and private partners in reuse programs and on varied ways to recruit volunteers. These actions all are designed to increase long-term support for equipment reuse programs.

In welcoming participants, Nell Bailey, Project Director of the RESNA Technical Assistance Project, noted that AT recycling programs are still in their beginning stages, with roles continuing to be defined as more AT equipment becomes available for recycling. The need for recycling efforts now is expanding rapidly, Bailey said, citing the National Safety Council's "Electronic Product Recovery and Recycling Baseline Report." According to the report, the volume of obsolete equipment is expected to grow with the proliferation of new technology. The recycling effort needed to address this equipment supply largely will depend on partnerships and collaborations among manufacturers, transportation providers, recyclers, third-party organizations, and others, Bailey stated.

Joy Kniskern, Project Coordinator of the Georgia Tools for Life Project, stressed the need for continuing dialogue about reuse programs. This discussion will assist programs in modeling "best practices," understanding costs and benefits, developing sustainable services, and impacting policy development surrounding computer and durable medical equipment reuse at state and national levels.

Sessions at the Atlanta reuse meeting offered information on ways to design programs to help ensure success and provided details on the operation of model reuse programs. Presenters shared strategies for facilitating corporate and nonprofit participation and suggested ways to tap local, state, and national resources.

A highlight of the two-day meeting was a tour of the ReBoot/FODAC equipment reuse facility. This facility houses the FODAC assistive technology recycling project and the ReBoot computer recycling project, which operate under a statewide partnership of Tools for Life, Touch the Future, Inc., and FODAC. ■



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## Corporate Philanthropy Mirrors Company's Marketing Goals

*The ReBoot recycling center works hard to welcome visitors to its center and to interest them in volunteering and working with the project. The first stop for visitors and volunteers is ReBoot's reception area, where scheduling and communications activities are operated.*

The paradigm for philanthropy of many high tech corporations has shifted notably in recent years. Many corporations now view donations and corporate giving as an intricate part of their marketing strategy. "Dot-coms look at philanthropy differently," said Karen Beavor of the Nonprofit Resource Center of Atlanta. "All of a corporation's social capital, that is, targeted donations and employee volunteer programs, is used by the company to help sell its products." Beavor spoke at the panel presentation "Facilitating Government, Corporate, and Private Industry Participation" at the Georgia conference.

Corporations are in the business of creating wealth and they work to leverage all their resources for maximum effect, including their philanthropic efforts, Beavor said. In fact, when corporations now become involved in a cause, they often want to steer the philanthropic work.

A reuse program looking for a corporation to help fund its recycling activities first must know how its reuse project fits into a corporation's plans. For example, Hewlett-Packard is interested in positioning itself as a company that is concerned with the environment and is a proponent of recycling. These goals are reflected in its philanthropy efforts: Hewlett-Packard donates computers and encourages its employees to volunteer with ReBoot, Georgia's computer reuse program.

*Volunteers at the ReBoot facility can receive extensive computer training. Mark Glass is one of ReBoot's volunteers who is working on his A+ certification in computer repair.*

Reuse programs should use a corporation's quest for a certain marketing image to the recycling program's advantage. "It's easy for companies to clear out the unused technology in their closets," especially if they want to present themselves as "eco-friendly," said Pat Hewitt, Worldwide Information Technology (IT) Project Manager with Hewlett-Packard. "Companies want public goodwill."

Reuse programs also need to be selective in choosing which companies they approach and how they want to involve these corporations. Companies do not want to compete with each other in their corporate giving.

Reuse programs may have to overcome resistance from corporations that have questions about their role after equipment is donated. Corporate partners mainly are concerned with questions of liability. Will corporations be liable for any of the technology that they donate? Will they need to provide customer support? Once assured by a reuse program that these concerns are groundless, through procedures such as thorough, established written policies of the reuse program, a corporate partner usually is more than eager to donate equipment.

Corporations also want the donation process to be easy, with little additional investment of time and effort by company staff. Hewitt offered this advice to reuse programs wishing to tap donations of computers and other technology:

1. Personal contacts at corporations are very important.
2. Look at a company's Web site to see if it addresses how an organization can acquire grants. Usually the "site manager" is the best contact rather than the "giving committee."
3. If a corporation is reluctant to support a reuse program wholeheartedly, a pilot donation program could be started. This smaller program could be expanded as the company becomes more comfortable with the project.

Some corporations also can help with fundraising activities. Patrick Giamonco, Public Relations Director for Microsoft Southeast, described how his company historically has sponsored Connected Learning Centers (CLCs) and donated software. CLC grants of up to $15,000 include donations of Microsoft products. Also, the Southeast office is involved in approximately 500 product marketing events each year. During these events, items like t-shirts, mugs, and other Microsoft giveaways are sold by the CLC as a fundraiser to support its operations.

Recycling programs that wish to partner with Microsoft need to go through one of Microsoft's district offices for marketing. These district offices handle all philanthropic requests. The Microsoft Web site—www.microsoft.com/usa—gives a map of all district offices in the United States. The Hewlett-Packard Web site is located at http://webcenter.hp.com/grants/us/hservices/.



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## Job Training Expands the Mission of Reuse Programs

With the employee shortage in the information technology (IT) industry reaching crisis proportions, reuse programs have an opportunity to train individuals who previously were left out of the IT job market. Currently, 600,000 high tech computer jobs are going unfilled. "There is a paradigm shift. Jobs are opening for people with disabilities," said Janet Hill, ADA Coordinator with the Georgia Department of Labor.

Funds available through public and private sources for training programs help reuse projects address the need for highly skilled workers. Reuse programs can establish their own training programs or partner with existing programs to provide IT training for persons with disabilities. Students receive training, in part, by refurbishing old computers for reuse programs. With this approach, students acquire hands-on experience with the technology. An added benefit for students is that those who do not have a computer can receive one of the recycled computers as a result of their volunteer time.

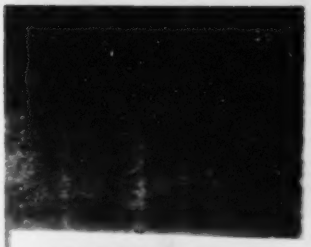
Gloria Kusmik, Director of the Georgia State Workforce Investment Board, suggested that the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) offers some exciting opportunities for equipment reuse programs. WIA is the first major reform of the country's job training system and is most noted for the coordination of many diverse jobs programs into a "one-stop" system in each state. Reuse programs can look to WIA as a potential funding source for their worker training programs. WIA provides individual training accounts (ITAs) at qualified institutions up to the full amount of the costs for training an individual. WIA stresses "universal access," that is, that the core employment-related services at the one-stop centers, including access to training, are open to anyone who wants to advance his or her career, including persons with disabilities. Reuse programs that provide worker training need to see themselves as part of their state's system. Reuse programs could become one of the qualified training institutions.

Carolyn Hargreaves, Special Assistant with the Jobs Training Division of the Georgia Department of Labor, indicated that a training program "that is relatively brief and has standards for its students," which lead to certification at a certain, specified level, will be the most successful. For example, training programs that lead to A+ certification fit those requirements. Persons with A+ certification can qualify for jobs with a good entry level wage. Additionally, there is a good career ladder open to those who have this baseline knowledge.

Yvette Marrin, President of the National Cristina Foundation, encouraged reuse programs to consider aligning themselves with CompTIA, the Computing Technology Industry Association. CompTIA developed the vendor-neutral A+ certification that has been widely adopted as the standard for entry level computer technicians. CompTIA now has established a Jobs+ program, which provides a job bank for A+ certified individuals seeking jobs. The Jobs+ project considers people with disabilities to be a large untapped talent pool of individuals who can become certified and fill some of the vacant high tech job slots.

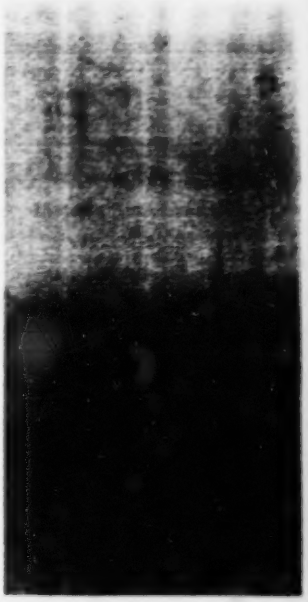
One example of a successful computer training partnership is the collaboration between the ReBoot program and Georgia Perimeter College. Cynthia Jackson, Coordinator of Technology for Continuing Education at the college, said that Georgia Perimeter College has offered an A+ training program for the past three years. The college encourages its students to volunteer at ReBoot/FODAC to enable the students to have experience refurbishing computers. Perimeter also asks the ReBoot/FODAC staff to encourage students with disabilities who are interested in becoming A+ certified to attend the college's computer training courses. ReBoot welcomes the expertise of the college student volunteers and has found the partnership with Perimeter to be very beneficial. In partnership with Perimeter College, ReBoot has begun writing grants for additional funding. The collaboration of the two groups has proved to be strong in grant competition.

Hargreaves urges those involved with reuse programs to participate in a local workforce investment board (LWIB), including becoming a member of the board—either as a person with a disability or as a representative of a disability organization. Hargreaves also encouraged reuse programs to have their training programs certified by their local board so their reuse programs can receive funds for the training they do. Each local workforce investment board certifies and sets standards for workforce training providers. Reuse programs need to be mindful of the criteria that their local workforce investment board uses to certify providers. This will ensure that their reuse training programs meet the standards and receive individual training account (ITA) funding.



*Yvette Marrin, National Cristina Foundation*

*Cynthia Jackson, Georgia Perimeter College*





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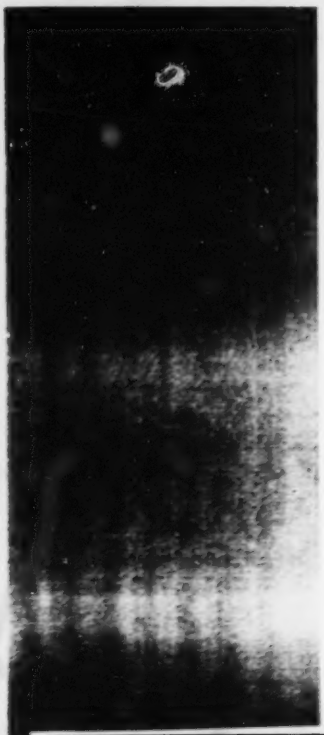

## Wisconsin Prison Project Benefits State and Inmates

Although keeping electronic equipment out of the state's landfills was the reason for the creation of the Wisconsin Computer Recycling Project in 1995, the benefits to the state have far exceeded this initial goal. Through the project's efforts, Wisconsin's youth and female inmates have learned to evaluate and repair computers, and many children at educational institutions have received the refurbished computers, according to Steve Kronzer, Director of the Bureau of Correctional Enterprises. Additionally, more than 200,000 pounds of electronic equipment have been recycled and saved from landfills.

Computers for the Wisconsin project primarily are donated by state agencies. For agencies donating less than 10 pieces of computer equipment, the agency must deposit the computers at one of 21 drop-off centers located throughout the state. For agencies donating more than 10 computers, the prison picks up the donations. The project has two program sites for recycling: one at a facility for female offenders, the other at a facility for youthful offenders. The youth conduct an initial assessment of the donated computers. Those that cannot be refurbished are "demanufactured." Demanufacturing is the process of breaking down the computers into metal, plastics, and other component parts. The prison finds markets for many of these raw materials. Female inmates refurbish and ready the computers either to be donated to educational institutions or to be sold to nonprofit organizations in Wisconsin.

*After keyboards are cleaned and repaired (if necessary), the equipment is stacked and available for redistribution. Keyboards can be distributed separately, if needed, or can be matched with refurbished computers and monitors.*

The Computer Recycling Project has provided many benefits. The inmates receive A+ training that can lead to certification and good job prospects once the inmates leave prison. Schools and individuals with disabilities receive the refurbished technology for free or at reduced prices. The inmates also benefit by the satisfaction that they receive through performing an important community service.

The project, located within the state's Department of Corrections, has received funding from several sources, including the Department of Human Resources and WisTech, the state assistive technology project. A goal for the project is to seek permanent funding. The governor has been very supportive, providing $410,000 early in the project's life and more recently by providing $500,000 to sponsor a welfare-to-work program that supplies a free computer to those who complete the training course.

Kronzer gave several tips to participants who want to start a reuse program:

1. Do not underestimate the response to your reuse program—you easily can become overwhelmed by the volume of donations.
2. A good transportation system is critical to the success of reuse programs. The Wisconsin prisons happened to have an existing system in place and were able to build upon it.
3. A+ certification training is a useful feature of computer reuse programs because the training leads to excellent employment opportunities.
4. Reuse programs are a good way to help states handle surplus computers.

## Alabama School System Provides Top-Notch Computer Repair Program

The computer repair training program at Scottsboro High School in Scottsboro, Alabama, offers students an integrated learning experience by combining basic electronics courses with computer repair training classes. The program is aimed at high school students who are in career and technical programs. Funding for the program comes from the Alabama STAR System, the state AT project, and other sources.

During their coursework, computer repair students refurbish donated computers, which then are given to individuals with disabilities. Last year 12 computers were upgraded and given away. Students interested in computer repair also can take additional training to earn A+ certification, said Patricia Austin, Director of Special Education Services for the school system.

In operating its training program for students, the school must employ several steps, from receiving donated computers to redistributing the newly refurbished machines. Initially, the school had to create a network for receiving donated computers and other technology. The program's computer donors have been able to qualify for tax deductions. The training program also has collaborated with the National Cristina Foundation (NCF), so it uses NCF's model for refurbishment and reutilization of used equipment. Students are trained using an industry approved curriculum for computer repair, which leads some students to receive A+ certification, the industry standard for national certification. Once the equipment is repaired and upgraded, it is placed into local schools for individual and



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classroom use or it is loaned to individuals and used for homework assignments.

"Our goal is to maintain the project and grow," said Austin. The school district currently is looking into adding another class to the basic electronics course. This class would concentrate on basic switch repair, which would help students refurbish assistive technology devices that use switches.

■ ■ ■

Scottsboro High School's computer repair curriculum provides students with many, varied opportunities in electronics and computer repair. The course syllabus that follows provides a detailed look at the 18-week program.

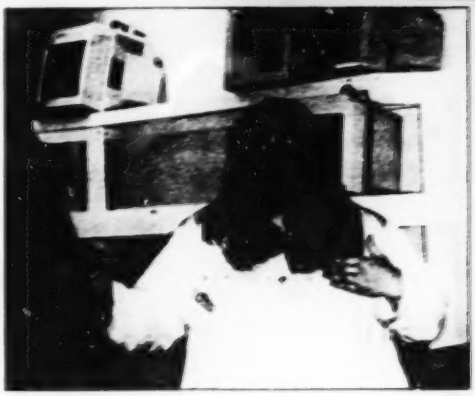
- Week 1: Tools, meters, electricity and safety, power supplies and problems, bytes and binary.
- Week 2: Key elements, motherboards, microprocessors, bus architecture.
- Week 3: PC system memory, advanced hard drives, system resources.
- Week 4: Modems, printers, monitors.
- Week 5: Disassembly, assembly, and startup.
- Week 6: DOS and Windows 3.X and Windows 95.
- Week 7: Networks, portables, cabling and connectors and preventive maintenance.
- Week 8: Hands-on activities: Take a 486 working computer—disassemble and reassemble.
- Weeks 9-15: Hands-on activities: Take old computers—status unknown—and repair.
- Weeks 16-18: Hands-on activities: Students may bring computers to work on.

## A Model for AT Reuse Programs: The ReBoot Project

Since the creation in 1998 of ReBoot—Georgia's highly successful AT reuse program— more than 1,700 high end computer systems have been recycled and placed with Georgians with disabilities. ReBoot was created out of a merger of Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC), Tools for Life (a project of the Georgia Division of Rehabilitation Service), and Touch the Future, a nonprofit initiated to enhance AT Act initiatives in Georgia. Before the merger, both Tools for Life and FODAC had operated separate computer reuse programs.

When striving for success, it does not matter if a reuse program is "big" or "small," said Carolyn Phillips, ReBoot Coordinator. What matters is if the program is effective in attaining its goals. This effectiveness can be achieved by focusing on the "keys" to success that can "make or break" a program, said Phillips, who provided these keys to success:

1. Stick to your vision, your guide in all matters.
2. Know where pockets of money are: reuse programs require tools and parts, which means that some source (or sources) of operational support will be essential in meeting production goals.
3. Keep things simple. A few, well thought out forms to track essential aspects of the project generally will provide the basis for operating an effective program. Better yet, projects should use electronic communications, on-line applications, and database tools to manage as much as possible without paper. As an example, ReBoot is developing an on-line application for users. Also, volunteers log-on hours on a computer set aside specifically for that function at ReBoot. All donor information is tracked electronically, although the program is not yet using optical character recognition tools, which would provide enhanced, systematic electronic tracking of recycled systems and donations.
4. Look at potential corporate partners, like PC user groups, and get involved with them. Attend meetings, visit their offices, and develop a relationship.
5. Market your service— reuse of computers is a service to industry and individual PC users—to target the donors you want, not the "universe." As Steve Kronzer pointed out, it is quite easy for new reuse programs to become overwhelmed by donations, and many of these items cannot be used by the program.
6. Be selective in what you take. In your marketing efforts, tell targeted donors and potential donors what you will and will not accept. For example, ReBoot now will accept only computers that are Pentium I's or higher.
7. Identify all program needs up front. Who will be your volunteers? How will you handle transportation issues? Where will you find your sources of funding?
8. Let your customers "drive" your services. Identify who they are and get their input.
9. Involve your customers in finding solutions. ReBoot operates under a practice of "sweat equity": each customer gives a minimum of 20



*Carolyn Phillips, ReBoot Coordinator, describes how computers initially are assessed after they are received at the center. At this stage, the decision is made either to refurbish a computer or to to "demanufacture" it and retain essential computer parts for the refurbishing of other computers.*

*Tony Whitehead, VI TRAID; Sonke Dornblut, NH Refurbished Equipment Marketplace, and Joanne Willis, FODAC listen to Bill Reace describe the finer points of refurbishing computers. Last year, ReBoot refurbished more than 1,700 computers.*

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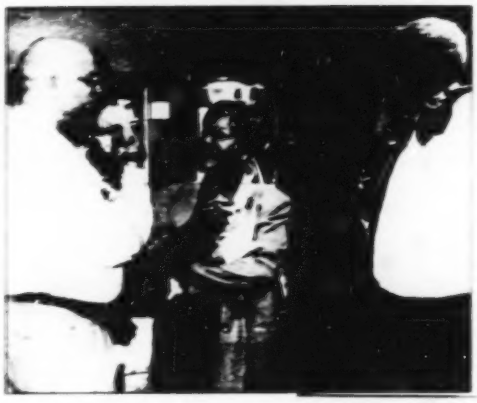
*Mark Richard, Hope Haven International Ministries*

*Steve Kronzer, Wisconsin Bureau of Correctional Enterprises*

hours of volunteer work to ReBoot or another group providing different services. This is a way for people to give back to the program and to their community. It increases the sense of ownership and provides on-the-job training for many ReBoot customers.

10. Develop a relationship with Centers for Independent Living and disability advocacy groups as partners, training and reuse deployment sites, and equipment donor sites. ReBoot works with 14 satellites sites in Georgia, which has greatly increased exposure to underserved and rural populations.
11. Respect and appreciate your volunteers. For example, ReBoot now provides a volunteer orientation every Wednesday. This orientation may include volunteers from PC user groups and corporations, and ReBoot customers who are getting ready to begin their "sweat equity" service. Also, one of ReBoot's major corporate partners, Hewlett-Packard, has sponsored a volunteer recognition luncheon at their corporate offices.
12. Carefully work with each applicant to provide an appropriate computer system based upon the person's individual goals. All ReBoot applicants must clearly identify their goals for using a computer.



*Conference participants, (from left) Tony Whitehead, Virgin Islands TRAID, Sonia Torres, Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Project, and Yegin Habtes, Virgin Islands TRAID, share a moment at the reception hosted by ReBoot/FODAC at the end of the tour.*

## Global Outlet for Reused Assistive Technology

Mark Richard, Operational Manager for Hope Haven's International Ministries, is a man on the move. During this past year Richard has traveled to Vietnam three times and to Central America twice in his efforts to deliver refurbished wheelchairs to people with mobility impairments. His work is part of the organization's worldwide mission to refurbish and distribute wheelchairs and other AT to people with disabilities. In the 7 years that Hope Haven has been collecting and shipping wheelchairs, it has distributed more than 14,000 wheelchairs in 71 countries.

Donations of used equipment are gathered from a number of sites across the country and funneled to one of four refurbishing sites where they are repaired and readied for distribution. Labor for the refurbishing is supplied by retired individuals, church service groups, youth groups, and prisoners in South Dakota. Each day, approximately 50 to 75 volunteers clean chairs, add new parts, and get the chairs ready for shipping. Cushions are made by volunteers on industrial sewing machines, with donated materials. Some volunteers specialize in one particular type of repair work, such as on tires and wheels, or on foot rests.

Transportation of wheelchairs for distribution in foreign countries also is provided through donated services. Hope Haven has limited the types of chairs that are sent to each local area. For example, only Invacare chairs or Quickie chairs may be shipped to an area. This is done to help aid later repairs and enable spare parts to be stocked. Hope Haven also provides expertise on how to use the chair and how to repair it.

Severely disabled individuals are the target group for wheelchair donations. While other international wheelchair projects stress local production of locally designed and built wheelchairs that can navigate rutted, unpaved roads and can be repaired using locally produced parts, Hope Haven sees a need for providing American-made chairs that aid the severely disabled population in a developing country. "These people have a goal to get out of bed, not down the road," Richard pointed out. The wheelchairs primarily are used indoors in the home or in an institution.

For more information about Hope Haven's International Ministries, go to the Web site http://www.hopehaven.org.

## Sources of Federal Grant Funding

Federal grant programs can provide funding opportunities for equipment reuse programs, as reported by Nancy Meidenbauer, Project Coordinator on the RESNA Technical Assistance Project. Some of these grants are available through the Department of Commerce and the Department of Education.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**Technology Opportunities Program (formerly TIIAP)**

**Purpose:** To promote the widespread availability and use of advanced telecommunications technologies in the public and non-public sectors. Grants are given for model projects demonstrating innovative uses of network technology.

For more information: http://www.ntia.gov/otiahome.html and www.ntia.doc.gov

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**General Grant Information**

http://ocfo.ed.gov/grntinfo/forecast/forecast.html

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**Community Technology Centers**

**Purpose**: To promote the development of model programs that demonstrate the educational effectiveness of technology in urban and rural areas and economically distressed communities. CTCs provide access to information technology and related learning services to children and adults.

For more information: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTC/ctcnews.html

**21st Century Community Learning Centers**

**Purpose**: To award grants to rural and inner-city public schools to enable them to plan, implement, or expand projects that benefit the educational, health, social services, cultural, and recreational needs of the community.

For more information: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/21stcclc/

## PC Users Groups—An Outstanding Source for Expert Volunteers

PC User Groups are a great source of computer experts and volunteers for reuse programs. According to Michael Rogers, President of the Atlanta PC Users Group, these user groups offer several benefits to reuse programs. One of the most important benefits is the volunteer work that members can provide. For example, at the ReBoot facility, 16 volunteers have stayed with the reuse program for 1 to 6 months, working in the warehouse, evaluating equipment, and stripping the machines and repairing them.

Members of PC Users Groups also provide a reuse program with connections to industry. The Atlanta group has members from Microsoft (an operating and software developer), Claris (a software provider), and Earthlink/Mindspring (an Internet service). These industry connections create opportunities to secure high end but technically obsolete computers, technically astute and dedicated volunteers, software donations, and grants.

User Group members receive benefits for their participation in a reuse program. Through providing a public service, the members derive satisfaction from their volunteer work. The club also gains an improved image within the community as it provides much needed services. Clubs find new members through their work with reuse programs.

Finding a User Group to partner with is not difficult. Local newspapers often list groups and their meeting times. Computer stores often know of clubs in the area and the local library also may provide listings. Additionally, there is the Association of PC User Groups, and a Web site at http://bbs.apcug.org/database/loclist.asp.

## What the Future Holds for Reuse Programs

Several experts in computer reuse and information technology shared their predictions of what the future holds for reuse programs during a lively panel discussion. Other conference participants also contributed their thoughts. The panelists' crystal balls indicate some interesting times ahead. The panelists included John Engman, Director of Jobs+ with CompTIA; Steve Kronzer, Director of the Wisconsin Bureau of Correctional Enterprises; Paul Luff, Coordinator of the New Hampshire Refurbished Equipment Marketplace; and Pat Hewitt, Worldwide IT Project Manager with Hewlett-Packard. Following are the experts' predictions.

1. Recycling of equipment will remain an important activity even though the cost of new equipment is coming down, which will make new equipment more affordable.

   "Legacy" computer systems still will be needed to retrieve archived data. Even though prices are coming down, there are still some people who do not have the $500 needed for a new computer system. So reused equipment will remain in demand. Although critics of efforts to use recycled computers in schools have cited incompatible systems and lack of software for their insistence on furnishing only new systems, reused equipment still can be valuable to schools if the recycled computers meet a school's requirements, such as receiving only high end computers and systems that match their current systems.

2. A national network should be created to bring together reuse programs, industry representatives, and training providers.

   Engman envisions this national network as one that would be composed of many individual networks that could work together in a coalition. One focus would be on tapping into the pool of workers with disabilities to fill not only A+ jobs but also those that require other skills. Advanced certifications currently are being created for Network+, I-net+ and Server+. Reuse programs would play important roles in the network by identifying potential workers and by providing needed programs for training and a structure for hands-on experiences. Industry would be able to rely on the network to reduce the total costs to a company for hiring qualified, skilled personnel.

3. New markets must be created for the raw materials associated with recycling.

   Today, no market exists for the plastics that are separated in the computer demanufacturing process, Kronzer said. Wisconsin has been trying to develop other uses for the raw materials but has had little success. Currently it is exploring the use of plastics to make insulation. More attention is needed in this area to make recycling more attractive.

4. Reuse programs continually will need to evaluate their programs and change as needed.

   Carolyn Phillips of ReBoot says the mantra should be "evaluate and evolve," which would allow reuse programs to keep up with the changing times. Luff pointed out that the New Hampshire Refurbished Equipment Marketplace, which uses a statewide vendor network to distribute its refurbished equipment, is now looking at a blended approach to distribution, with direct sales as a component.

5. Barriers must be eliminated for consumers who wish to use reused equipment.

   This idea has several elements to consider:

   - Consumers lack knowledge of reuse programs. More public awareness is needed to ensure that consumers have access to reused equipment.
   - Consumers need assistance to assess what they really need. Reuse programs offer a tremendous advantage to consumers by routinely allowing customers to try out the equipment before they decide what they want.

- The cost of new technology is high. Computers, for example, were developed and priced for institutions. When these devices became popular for individuals, prices were not reduced to reflect this change.
- There is a lack of software for older computers.

6. New policies must be developed to help support the reuse of equipment.

For example, additional incentives could be created to encourage more people to donate. The New Millennium Classrooms Act (under consideration in the U.S. Senate), which is supported by CompTIA, would expand tax incentives for businesses that donate used computers, Engman said.

## Connecticut RFP Process Yields Comprehensive AT Center

Connecticut's Department of Social Services recently announced that the Connecticut Institute for the Blind (CIB)/Oak Hill has been awarded a contract to develop a demonstration center and equipment restoration program for AT. CIB's program, the New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Marketplace, will operate a regional marketplace that potentially could become a national model for making new and used AT devices easier to find, try out, and purchase for individuals of all ages with disabilities.

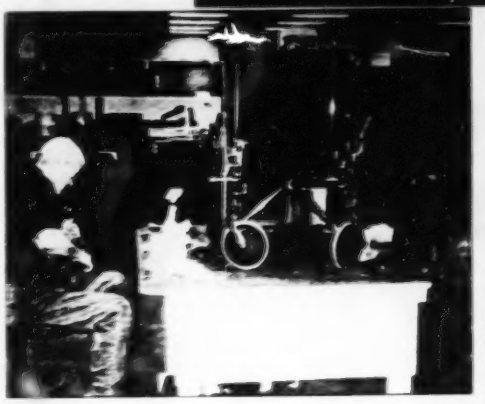
Connecticut used a request for proposal (RFP) process to advance AT reuse efforts in the state. John Ficarro, Project Director of the Connecticut Assistive Technology Project, spearheaded the solicitation for proposals by coordinating the development of specifications, based on consumer input. The specifications had three conditions. A successful program needed: (1) to be comprehensive and statewide in nature, (2) to use a vendor-based model, and (3) to use a design that would enable the program to become self-sufficient. Collaboration with equipment providers and other entities in the state was strongly encouraged, but not required.

The NEAT Demonstration Center will feature specialized exhibits that show a vast array of state-of-the-art AT equipment; provide demonstrations and training by professional service providers, vendors, and manufacturers; offer information and referral, including funding sources, to customers; and provide opportunities for consumers to be assessed for appropriate use and fit of AT.

The NEAT Equipment Restoration Center will restore donated equipment and sell it for the cost of the parts and repair, plus a small mark-up, to vendors who carry that line of equipment. The vendors will then sell this equipment to their customers at a small mark-up, enabling people with disabilities to purchase needed equipment at a fraction of the original cost.

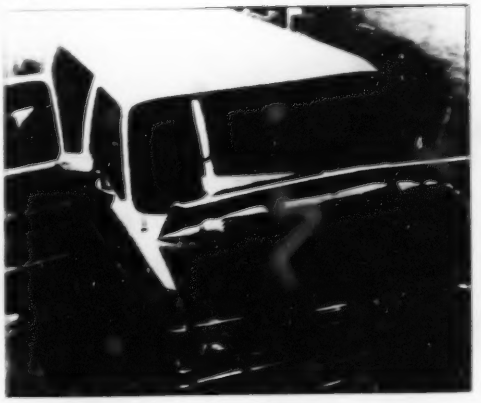
Temporarily, the NEAT Marketplace is operating in 6,000 square feet of space at the Oak Hill Campus, located in Hartford. This site provides space for demonstrations, workshops, and training, and a computer laboratory. Eventually permanent space will be constructed, comprised of 14,000 square feet of space, which will allow the center to expand.

For more information about the NEAT Marketplace go to: http://www.neatmarketplace.org. ■



*Two long-time FODAC volunteers assess and repair wheelchairs.*

*ReBoot offers adaptive toys through its lending library.*



*A FODAC contractor modifies the interior of a van for a client.*

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